UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/50/212/Add.1
21 July 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fiftieth session
Items 18 and 90 of the provisional agenda*

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

Report of the Secretary-General

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II. REPLIES FROM THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FORMING PART OF OR ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

[Original: English]

[7 July 1995]

Tokelau

1. The main development objectives of UNDP's third country programme for Tokelau (1992-1996) focused primarily on developing a national identity and assumption of a greater degree of self-government; improvement of living standards on the atolls; ensuring the equitable distribution of resources; and encouraging the active participation of the people in the development policy process. These were to be achieved, inter alia, through the development of the transport communication system and the enhancement and supplementation of the present subsistence lifestyle. Tokelau has progressed significantly towards the achievement of those goals with significant assistance from UNDP in the third country programme, although, since 1993, there has been a marked shift in the administration's focus towards political and constitutional strengthening that has been largely supported by the Government of New Zealand. Some special programme resources funding from UNDP was allocated to cover costs of workshops on the constitution in early 1995.

2. Traditionally, Tokelau has a strong local government system based at the atoll village level, with each of the atolls administering its own affairs independently. The current political changes, which have seen the establishment of the General Fono (the parliament) as the paramount decision-making body whose powers are vested in the Council of Faipule (the executive arm of the government or Cabinet) when it is not in session, with the aim of instituting a national government system. The Council of Faipule comprises three Faipule, or political leaders, of each of the three atolls, who are chosen by their local constituents on a three-year election cycle. The political leaders rotate annually in holding the position of Head of the Council of Faipule (or Ulu o Tokelau), a solution to ensuring that political leadership and authority are shared among the atolls that is unique to Tokelau.

3. Since 1993, therefore, the main developmental concerns of the country have centred squarely on political adjustments and strengthening, with the delegation of the powers and authority of the Administrator of Tokelau (a senior diplomat in New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to the General Fono and the Council of Faipule when the General Fono is not in session, and developing the decision-making capacity of those new national political structures and reformation and relocation of the Tokelau public service. These factors are intertwined and have predominated Tokelau's developmental thinking over the past three years.

4. This heightened political awareness and development activity have to some extent come from the United Nations, which, by the General Assembly in its resolutions 48/46, 48/47 and 48/51 to 48/53 of 10 December 1993, was mandated to assist all non-self-governing territories to attain self-determination and/or independence from colonial or other forms of foreign administration and control, by the target year of 2000. Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/37, which reconfirms the United Nations resolution to extend all appropriate assistance to such nations, is firmly in the forefront of the UNDP efforts for Tokelau, which will continue into the next country programme in appropriate ways.

5. A Committee of 24 mission to Tokelau in July 1994 found that the Tokelauans, although they were taking major steps towards the eventual attainment of a greater degree of self-government, wished at that point of their national political development to maintain a relationship of "free association" with New Zealand.

6. In relation to General Assembly resolution 49/46 A of 9 December 1994, in which the Assembly requests the Special Committee to continue the examination of the question of the small Territories and to recommend to the Assembly the most suitable steps to be taken to enable the populations of those Territories to exercise their right to self-determination and independence, and to report thereon to it at its fiftieth session, it is likely that the next UNDP country programme for Tokelau will focus on institution-building and capacity-building in the public service, in particular in areas of governance and public enterprise administration and management. Tokelau has expressed an interest in private sector development, especially in the area of small business development, for which the International Labour Organization (ILO) has been requested to formulate an investigatory study for the sector using TSS-1 funding. The Partners in Development Programme II, which provides assistance to grass-roots non-governmental organizations for innovative activities aimed at eradicating poverty and creating more jobs for the unemployed, will also be another resource that will be tapped to assist the Tokelau administration in its achievement of sustainable human development in the long term.

7. The Tokelau Telecommunications Project (TOK/94/001), which will be officially signed in Apia on Friday, 23 June 1995 (an Advance Authorization was approved in April 1995), will have a great impact on the pace of development in Tokelau as it opens up the channels of communication with the outside world and between the atolls themselves. Both Tokelau and the Government of New Zealand are providing the funds to cover the capital assistance component of the project, which is a clear indication of the spirit of partnership and mutual respect that exists between New Zealand and Tokelau and their commitment, in practical terms, to an outcome whereby Tokelau can have as much opportunity to rely upon itself in managing its own internal and external affairs as possible. As stated by the Tokelau Administrator, Mr. Lindsay Watt, at a meeting in New York in May 1995, Tokelau says in effect that it wishes to assert its distinctive character and to be as self-reliant as possible. This was clarified by Mr. Logotasi Iosefa, the Special Representative of Tokelau at that same meeting, who said that New Zealand had reiterated its traditional position that it would continue to be guided solely by the people of Tokelau as to the future

status of the territory and assured the people of Tokelau of its continuing assistance in the event that they should desire to change their status.

8. The following words of the Tokelau Administrator during the recent visit to New York accurately state the present situation regarding the question of Tokelau's movement towards making an act of self-determination, and what direction future assistance to Tokelau should take:

> "The 'Voice of Tokelau' is formally on the table in Wellington besides New York, since it was transmitted to the New Zealand Government following last July's Visiting Mission (of the Committee of 24). What this important document reflects is the principle that a former administering Power and the international community should make specific efforts to help a very small country facing constraints of Tokelau's type. Such assistance would be of an ongoing type. The central thought is that after self-determination Tokelau would not be cut adrift and that New Zealand, besides other external partners in their appropriate ways, would see it as part of their function to help Tokelau succeed."

9. UNDP is particularly suited to providing technical and professional assistance in many areas as far-ranging as fiscal management, the establishment of judicial systems and treaties, environment protection and resource management, participation in regional and international activities and so on from the various resources it has at its disposal. As the resources are not infinite, UNDP must continue its close working partnership with the Tokelau administration to determine the most appropriate development strategy for the next programme cycle.